CLAIMS:

1.   A system comprising:

a client computer; and

a server providing an operating environment for a dispute resolution system,

wherein the dispute resolution system receives case information from the client computer that describes an electronic commerce dispute from one or more parties to the dispute, and

wherein the dispute resolution system compares the case information to facts of previously resolved disputes to automatically select a resolution mode comprising one of (i) a direct negotiation mode that allows the parties to directly negotiate a resolution to the dispute via the computer network, (ii) a conciliation mode that allows the parties to negotiate the resolution to the dispute through a mediator, and (iii) mediation mode that allows a mediator to propose a resolution to the dispute.

2.   The system of claim 1, wherein the server provides a pre-programmed recommended resolution to at least one of the parties based on the comparison.

3.   A method for encouraging parties to an electronic commerce dispute to resolve the dispute through direct negotiation via a computer network comprising:

maintaining a database that stores facts and outcomes of previously resolved electronic commerce disputes;

receiving case information that describes the electronic commerce dispute from one or more of the parties to the dispute via the network;

searching the database to identify previously resolved disputes with facts that are similar to the case information;

identifying at least one likely outcome of the dispute based on the outcomes of the identified previously resolved disputes; and

presenting the identified likely outcomes to the parties as a potential resolution to the dispute to assist the parties in negotiating a resolution to the dispute.

4.   A method for integrating an online dispute resolution system with an electronic marketplace to allow users of the electronic marketplace to resolve disputes and provide users of the electronic assurance that disputes will be resolved, the method comprising:

providing an electronic marketplace as a website that is accessed by users via a computer network and enables the users to buy and sell items;

indicating within the electronic marketplace website the availability of a dispute resolution system that is coupled to the computer network to resolve disputes between the users of the electronic marketplace;

embedding uniform resource locators associated with the dispute resolution system within a hypertext markup language application for the website to enable users of the electronic marketplace to access the dispute resolution system from the electronic marketplace; and

displaying visual indicia within the website that are associated with users of the electronic marketplace, wherein the appearance of the visual indicia is related to data maintained by the online dispute resolution system that is related to use of the dispute resolution system by the users.

5.   The method of claim 4, wherein displaying visual indicia comprises displaying symbols of trust.

6.   The method of claim 5, wherein displaying symbols of trust comprise displaying medallions.

7.   The method of claim 4, wherein indicating within the electronic marketplace website the availability of a dispute resolution system comprises indicating the availability of a dispute resolution system to resolve disputes between the users of the electronic marketplace by displaying to the users visual indicia associated with the dispute resolution system within the electronic marketplace.

8.   A method comprising:

providing an electronic marketplace that is accessed by users via a computer network and enables the users to buy and sell items; and

indicating the availability of a dispute resolution system to resolve disputes between the users of the electronic marketplace by displaying to the users electronic visual indicia associated with the dispute resolution system within the electronic marketplace.

9.   The method of claim 8, further comprising:

embedding uniform resource locators associated with the dispute resolution system within a hypertext markup language application for the website to enable users of the electronic marketplace to access the dispute resolution system from the electronic marketplace; and

displaying the visual indicia within the website that are associated with users of the electronic marketplace, wherein the appearance of the visual indicia is related to data maintained by the online dispute resolution system that is related to use of the dispute resolution system by the users.

10.   The method of claim 8, further comprising displaying the visual indicia to indicate which of the users are members in the dispute resolution system.

11.   The method of claim 10, further comprising controlling the appearance of the visual indicia based on data maintained by the dispute resolution system

12.   The method of claim 8, further comprising controlling the appearance of the visual indicia based on data maintained by the dispute resolution system that describes the use of the dispute resolution system by the users.

13.   The method of claim 11, further comprising controlling the appearance of the medallions based on participation of the users within the dispute resolution processes and compliance with results of the dispute resolution process.

14. The method of claim 8, wherein displaying visual indicia comprises displaying symbols of trust.

15. The method of claim 14, wherein displaying symbols of trust comprise displaying medallions.

16. The method of claim 8, further comprising:

maintaining a database that stores facts and outcomes of previously resolved electronic commerce disputes within the electronic marketplace;

receiving case information that describes an electronic commerce dispute from one or more of parties to the dispute;

searching the database to identify previously resolved disputes with facts that are similar to the case information;

identifying at least one likely outcome of the dispute based on the outcomes of the identified previously resolved disputes; and

presenting the identified likely outcomes to the parties as a potential resolution to the dispute to assist the parties in negotiating a resolution to the dispute.

17. The method of claim 8, further comprising:

training a dispute resolution specialist by requiring the dispute resolution specialist to experience transactions within online marketplaces including at least an auction site;

presenting simulated online dispute resolution cases to the dispute resolution specialists to assess the skills of the dispute resolution specialists; and

assigning the dispute to the dispute resolution specialists only upon completion of the training and successful resolution of the simulated online dispute resolution cases.

18.   A method for indicating to users of an electronic marketplace whether other users of the electronic marketplace participate in an online dispute resolution system comprising:

providing an electronic marketplace via a website that is accessed by users via a computer network and enables the users to buy and sell items;

displaying visual indicia received from the dispute resolution system and associated with users of the electronic marketplace that participate in the dispute resolution system within the website; and

controlling the appearance of the medallions visual indicia as a function of data that is maintained by a server associated with the dispute resolution system and that relates to participation of the users of the electronic marketplace in the dispute resolution system.

19.   The method of claim 18, wherein displaying visual indicia comprises displaying the visual indicia within web pages associated with users of the electronic marketplace that participate in the dispute resolution system.

20.   The method of claim 18, wherein displaying visual indicia comprises displaying symbols of trust.

21.   The method of claim 20, wherein displaying symbols of trust comprise displaying medallions.

22.　An online dispute resolution system comprising a computing system that performs a computer-assisted multi-mode dispute resolution process for resolving a dispute between two parties, wherein the computing system:

performs an analysis of the dispute and present pre-programmed recommended resolutions based on the analysis in a first mode;

performs a match of needs of the two parties as defined by the dispute to resolve the dispute in a second mode;

provides a medium for the parties to independently resolve the dispute in a third mode; and

assigning a dispute resolution specialist to resolve the dispute in a fourth mode upon failure to reach a resolution in at least one of the other modes.

23.　The method of claim 22, wherein the dispute resolution specialist utilizes a message exchange of the computing system to interact with the parties to reach a recommended resolution.

24.　The method of claim 22, wherein the computing system assigns the dispute resolution specialists

25.　An online dispute resolution system comprising a software program to automatically assemble case information that describes an electronic commerce dispute between parties from records provided by the parties, wherein the software module presents sample resolutions to the parties to aid the parties in resolving the case, and disaggregates elements of the dispute and presents the case information in a form that identifies areas of agreement between the parties.

26.　The system of claim 25, further comprising a case base reasoning system that processes the case information that identifies similar past cases, and presents one or more settlement proposals and likely outcomes for the parties to assist the parties in resolving the dispute.

27.   The system of claim 25, further comprising a case-history database, and wherein the system automatically presents sample resolutions from the case-history database to assist the parties to directly resolve the case.

28.   The online dispute resolution system of claim 25, further comprising a software program to prompt settlement between the parties.

29.   A method comprising:

training a dispute resolution specialist by requiring the dispute resolution specialist to experience transactions within online marketplaces including at least an auction site;

presenting simulated online dispute resolution cases to the dispute resolution specialists to assess the skills of the dispute resolution specialists; and

assigning online disputes to the dispute resolution specialists only upon completion of the training and successful resolution of the simulated online dispute resolution cases.

30.   An online dispute resolution system comprising:

a first software program operating on a computing system to assemble case information that describes an electronic commerce dispute between parties from records provided by the parties; and

a second software program operating on the computing system to assist a dispute resolution specialist in identifying similar cases from a historical database of past cases.

31.   The online dispute resolution system of claim 30, wherein the first software program aids the dispute resolution staff by automatically assembling the case information in a defined time from which to formulate a settlement proposal.

32.   The online dispute resolution system of claim 30, wherein the second software program provides a market-based system for assigning the dispute resolution specialist from a plurality of dispute resolution specialists by automatically matching specializations and interests of the plurality of dispute resolution specialists.

33.   The online dispute resolution system of claim 30, wherein the first software program allows the dispute resolution specialist to request additional case information from the parties, and the first software program includes an interface that enables the parties to electronically submit evidence in electronic form.

34.   The online dispute resolution system of claim 30, wherein the system resolves disputes among multiple parties and allow the multiple parties to participate in a discovery and evidence submission process carried out by the first software program.

35.   The online dispute resolution system of claim 30, wherein the system requires user identification and password information to access the case information.

36.   The online dispute resolution system of claim 30, wherein the system includes messaging software that generates automate messages to the parties and the dispute resolution specialist.

37.   The online dispute resolution system of claim 36, wherein the messaging software issues an automated acknowledgement message to a complainant when the complainant files a complaint.

38.   The online dispute resolution system of claim 37, wherein the messaging software issues an automated notification message to a respondent once the complaint is filed.

39.   The online dispute resolution system of claim 38, wherein the messaging software determines whether the respondent does not respond to filed complaint period, and issues an automated reminder message to remind the respondent to respond and a message to notify the complainant of the delay.

40. The online dispute resolution system of claim 39, wherein the messaging software determines whether the respondent does not respond to filed complaint within a pre-defined time period after the issuance of the reminder message, and issues an automated message to the respondent indicating that the dispute may be closed and disciplinary action may follow if the respond fails to respond within the pre-defined time period.

41. The online dispute resolution system of claim 39, wherein if the respondent continues to fail to respond the messaging software issues an automated message to the respondent indicating that a default action against the respondent may result.

42. The online dispute resolution system of claim 39, wherein if the respondent continues to fail to respond the messaging software issues an automated message to the respondent adverse default decision, issues an automated message to the complainant of a default victory.

43. The online dispute resolution system of claim 36, further comprising software for automatically assigning the dispute resolution specialist from a plurality of dispute resolution specialist, and wherein the messaging software issues automated messages to a complainant, a respondent, and the assigned dispute resolution specialists as notification of the assignment.

44. The online dispute resolution system of claim 43, wherein the messaging software determines whether the assigned dispute resolution specialist does not respond within a pre-defined time period, and issues an automated reminder message to the dispute resolution specialist.

45. The online dispute resolution system of claim 44, wherein the messaging software determines whether the assigned dispute resolution specialist does not respond within a pre-defined time period to the automated reminder, and automatically reassigns the dispute too a different one of the plurality of dispute resolution specialists.

46. The online dispute resolution system of claim 43, wherein the messaging software issues an automated message to one of the parties indicating the assigned dispute resolution specialist has requested conciliation information.

47. The online dispute resolution system of claim 43, wherein the messaging software issues an automated message to one of the parties indicating the assigned dispute resolution specialist has requested additional case information.

48. The online dispute resolution system of claim 43, wherein the messaging software issues automated messages notifying the parties when a resolution has passed.